

NEWS RELEASE



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MEMBER OF METHAMPHETAMINE TRAFFICKING ORGANIZATION SENTENCED IN FEDERAL COURT

Lake Charles man sentenced to 14 years federal prison time for methamphetamine distribution

LAKE CHARLES, LOUISIANA . . . United States Attorney Donald W. Washington that JESSIE ORTIZ, age 25, from Houston, Tx was sentenced today by United States District Judge Patricia Minaldi to 168 months (14 years) federal imprisonment to be followed by 5 years supervised release for conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute methamphetamine.

U.S. Attorney Washington stated, "We will continue to wage the war against illegal drug trafficking. Meth, crack, and other illegal drugs severely impacts, and sometimes destroys, the future of those poor souls who fall to the use of such drugs. I applaud Sheriff Mancuso, Chief Dixon, the FBI, and all agents, officers and prosecutors who aggressively pursue drug traffickers."

ORTIZ and four co-conspirators were indicted in August 2005 following an investigation by FBI

Gang Task Force the U.S. Marshal Service, and the Calcasieu Parish Combined Anti-Drug Task Force team into a methamphetamine distribution ring operating between the Sulphur/Lake Charles area and Houston, Texas. A sixth defendant was charged by Bill of Information.

The other defendants, their charges, and status are listed below.

| NAME | AGE AND HOMETOWN | CHARGE |
|--------------------|---------------------------------|---|
| Ortiz, Jesus | Age 25; Houston, Texas | Trial pending |
| Melarine, Angie M. | Age 29; Lake Charles, Louisiana | Pled guilty in May 2006 to Misprision of a Felony. Sentenced to 3 years Probation |
| Fontenot, David W. | Age 28; Lake Charles, Louisiana | Pled guilty in March 2006 to Conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute in excess of 5 grams of methamphetamine. |
| Peeler, Curtis W. | Age 26; Sulphur, Louisiana | Pled guilty in May 2006 to conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute in excess of 5 grams of methamphetamine. |
| Tidwell, Jason D. | Age 25; Ragley, Louisiana | Pled guilty in May 2006 to conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute in excess of 5 grams of methamphetamine. |

ORTIZ and his co-conspirators were operating out of a Comfort Suites Hotel in the Sulphur, Louisiana area when they were arrested on August 11, 2005. As a result of the investigation and arrests, agents seized in excess of \$12,000 in cash, over a pound of methamphetamine, four weapons including a TEC 9, a bullet proof vest, and a Ford Mustang.

This case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Larry J. Regan.

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